

Church of Jesus Christ

Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

NEWSLETTER

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We give thanks



News & Notes

What's inside?

Christmas activities

Some special Christmas activities are planned for the season of Christ's birth in the Mount Ayr Branch.

The branch has the opportunity to help make Christmas brighter for families in the area. Details are included on page 10.

Joel Loving will be speaking for the Christmas service planned Sunday, Dec. 20. The regular schedule will be followed with the preaching service at 11 a.m.

The branch caroling party will be held Sunday, Dec. 20, at 6 p.m. with everyone meeting at the Ron and Di Smith home.

New Year's Eve activity

Watch for details about the New Year's Eve activity to be held Thursday, Dec. 31.

Thanksgiving Dinner

The branch had its annual Thanks-

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BE PREPARED

Priest Ben Anderson
Maryville, MO
November 8, 2015

Brother Ben Anderson read from Matthew 25:1-12 as his scripture reading. *And then, at the day, before the Son of Man comes, the kingdom of heaven shall be likened unto ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five of them were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Lest there be not enough for us and you, go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, Ye know me not. Watch therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.*

I gave everybody a little piece of paper with scriptures on it. I gave you those so you can study what I am talking about. I will use all of those scriptures in today's sermon, and I gave them to you so that you can study them to make sure that I am correct as I might have interpreted things wrong or I might have not understood things. It is our responsibility, each of us, to study everything out for ourselves and not just take someone else's word for it.

In the story of the Ten Virgins five of them were wise and five of them were

foolish. We want to know how to be like the five wise virgins so I'm going to start with Proverbs 16:1 which tells us that we're supposed to prepare our hearts unto the Lord. That is what the Lord wants us to do. In Alma 16:127 it says, *And now when Alma heard this, he turned him about, his face immediately towards him, and he beheld, with great joy; for he beheld that their afflictions had truly humbled them, and that they were in a preparation to hear the word.* So prepare your hearts and then you're humbled and ready to hear God's word.

We know in Mosiah 1:118 and 3rd Nephi 5:40 that we're supposed to be humble as little children to inherit the Kingdom of God which raises a question for us. How do we become humble? In Psalms 35:13 David was praying for safety and he said that he was fasting to humble himself. Fasting is not something we just do. It's actually a commandment that we are supposed to do.

In I Corinthians 7:5 it says that we're supposed to break away on our own, fast and pray and then come back together. It's also an example that Christ set for us when He was on the earth. Matthew 4 has an account of Him going away by Himself to fast 40 days, and we're supposed to be following Christ's example. The very act of fasting is an acknowledgment that we need God. There's not anything that we can do without Him. When we fast we're acknowledging the fact that He provides for us and has given us all the blessings that we have.

Mosiah 2:21 and Alma 10:28 tell us that we're also supposed to pray. Praying is another act of fasting because we're asking for the things that we need that we can't provide for ourselves. Alma 10:28 takes it a little farther in saying that we're praying so that we will not be tempted above that which we can bear.

I want to make a point that praying daily doesn't eliminate the temptations. The closer we get to God, the more we're trying to do what He wants us to do and the harder satan fights to draw us away

from God. Our prayers are our defense to not be tempted above what we can bear so we can withstand the darts that satan throws at us.

The best scripture regarding humbleness and prayer is found in Section 18:6a of the Doctrine and Covenants. *Pray always and I will pour out my Spirit upon you, and great shall be your blessing; yea, even more than if you should obtain treasures of earth and corruptibility to the extent thereof.* That's kind of what we're all working for. It's the Lord's Spirit to be poured out upon us. That's what we're working for individually and collectively that we can have His Spirit to guide us.

Sometimes we may get prideful or stray off the path a little bit but Christ has a way of humbling us. In Ether 5:28 it says, *I give unto men weakness, that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak thing become strong unto them.* He gives us our weakness when we're not being humble which can compel us to be humble.

In Alma 16:134 it says, *And now because ye are compelled to be humble, blessed are ye; for a man sometimes, if he is compelled to be humbled, seeketh repentance.* So if we are compelled to be humble it causes us to seek repentance.

Moroni 8:29 says after you are compelled to be humble repentance comes and after repentance comes forgiveness and then meekness. Meekness is serving others which is an act of humbleness because it is putting others before you. After you have meekness, comes the Holy Ghost. If we don't do it ourselves, then God can use our weakness to humble us. I want to point out also that it says that sometimes if we are compelled to be humble we'll seek repentance. Meaning, not everyone that is compelled to be humble seeks repentance. Seeking repentance is the necessary path to receive the Holy Ghost after



we have been compelled to be humble via our weaknesses.

We answered the first question of being prepared. We have to be humble to get the Holy Ghost. Now I'm going to ask what we can do to not be deceived.

I'm going to start with Ephesians 5:6 where it talks about vain words deceiving us. Jeremiah 44:16 talks about pride deceiving us. Doctrine and Covenants 50:1b talks about satan who tries to deceive us all the time. Proverbs 24:28 talks about our lips not lying. One of the most important ones for everybody is I Corinthians 3:18 which talks about deceiving ourselves. We have to be careful in everything that we do and we have to keep our focus on God so we know when we're trying to lie to ourselves.

We know the things that deceive us and Proverbs 20:1 says . . . *and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.* So if we are deceived we are not wise. This is reinforced in Proverbs 14:8 where it says . . . *the folly of fools is deceit.* So we can't be deceitful or deceived to be wise which still doesn't answer the question.

How do we become wise? I'm going to read three scriptures for you. These are ways that we can become wise. II Tim 3:16 reads, *And all scripture given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.* Then Proverbs 4:13 says, *Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go; keep her; for she is thy life.* Proverbs 19:20 says, *Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.* We need to study the scriptures that He has given us and it also says in Proverbs 4:13 that we are to take hold of this instruction and accept it and that we're supposed to receive it. If you go to Proverbs 1:7 it says that fools despise instruction so if you want to be wise you actually have to

accept instruction. When we receive that instruction the wisdom will come from Christ.

Just on a side note, if these are acceptable for correction and instruction then they are also acceptable for study. There are a few scriptures that tell us to study which are found in Mosiah 1:10-11; John 5:40 and I Timothy 4:12-13. Doctrine and Covenants 87:5 also says that we're supposed to seek out good books not just the scriptures but good books regarding not only Christ, but books that are educational and enlightening.

I'm going to read Psalms 111:10, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do his commandments; his praise endureth forever.* Proverbs 15:33 says, *The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom,* so that raises another question. What is the fear of the Lord? The answer is found in Proverbs 8:13 which says, *The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.* If the fear of the Lord is in you, you hate arrogance and pride which gives you wisdom.

The third way you can get wisdom is in Psalms 37:30. *The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.* We know that this is a way we can get wisdom because Proverbs 2:7 tells us, *He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous.* If He is the one giving the righteous wisdom, you know that they have the wisdom to give us and that's why we should listen to what they have to say. Wisdom can come from anybody. It doesn't just come from one individual. It can come from anybody that God gives the wisdom to because anybody that is righteous can receive that wisdom.

If we have failed to do the other ones or can't figure out how to do the others ones read James 1:5. Everybody knows that scripture Joseph Smith read, that says *if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally.*

Those are the ways that we can get wisdom so that we can figure out how

to be prepared.

There's one last thing that I think we might overlook in the parable of the Ten Virgins and that's the factor of time. Five virgins were prepared and ready and they answered the call. The five unwise virgins were not prepared and they didn't have the Holy Ghost with them. They went to get the oil and when they came back they couldn't get in. They weren't on time to get there.

The reason that's important is in Alma 19:44-45. *And then shall it come to pass that the spirits of those who are righteous, are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise; a state of rest; a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles, and from all care, and sorrow, etc. And then shall it come to pass, that the spirits of the wicked, yea, who are evil; for behold, they have no part nor portion of the Spirit of the Lord: for behold they choose evil works, rather than good: therefore the spirit of the devil did enter into them, and take possession of their house.* I just wanted to mention this because if we're prepared and we study now then we'll be on time because we'll know what we're supposed to be doing.

There are two last scriptures that I want to read for you. The first one is Proverbs 6:23. *For the commandment is*



Ben Anderson



a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life. And Doctrine and Covenants 45:10b which says, And at that day when I shall come in my glory, shall the parable be fulfilled which I spake concerning the ten virgins; for they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit

for their guide, and have not been deceived, verily I say unto you.

The Holy Spirit is our oil and our scriptures are our lamp that teaches us that we need to be humble and that by being humble we can receive the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is what will guide our way.

I know that this parable deals with the returning of Christ but if you don't humble yourself and prepare your heart each and every day to be led by the Holy Ghost you won't be ready to receive the blessings and guidance that is needed in your daily life.



TO KNOW HOW TO SUCCOR US

High Priest Alan Smith
Mount Ayr, Iowa
November 15, 2015

Alma's prophecy about what Jesus Christ would do when he came to earth adds additional perspectives to the depth of his love for us and helps us remember what it was for the son of God to take on mortality. Feast upon these words. No where in scripture is this more eloquently expressed.

"For behold, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and the Son of God cometh upon the face of the earth.

And behold, he shall be born of Mary at Jerusalem, which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed, and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God;

And he shall go forth, suffering pains, and afflictions, and temptations of every kind;

And this that the word might be fulfilled which saith, He will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people; and he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people:

And he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities." Alma 5: 18-22)

Remember Enoch's experience where he came to understand the love of God?

"Wherefore Enoch knew and looked upon their wickedness, and their misery; and wept, and stretched forth his arms, and his heart swelled wide as eternity, and his bowels yearned, and all eternity shook." (Genesis 7:48)

The same metaphor is used by Alma to express Christ taking on humanness so that his bowels could be filled with mercy -- so that he "would know according to the flesh how to succor him people according to their infirmities."

As the dictionary expresses succor -- so he could give assistance and support to us in times of hardship and distress. Or in another way -- he came to earth to live life with us so that he could understand more fully and better help us come back to the Father. Wow!

Sometimes we think of the divine nature of Christ -- God come to earth -- and minimize his humanity. Alma tells us that part of the reason he came in the flesh was to understand fully what it was like to be one of his creation here on earth. He came to show us how to live, but came to understand us as well, so that he would share the joy and sorrow that are part of life on earth. He made his sacrifice so we could not say "You just don't understand what I'm going through." He can say, "I understand your plight. I understand your suffering. I understand your joy."

Jesus had experiences that run the

gamut of emotions we feel. The scriptures share these with us, but sometimes we may overlook them.

Let's start with the temptations that Alma writes about.

Temptations

Jesus suffered temptations the scriptures tell us. We know of the time he met Satan face to face -- the son of light facing the son of darkness. This was the ultimate in withstanding temptation.

Jesus had been led by the Spirit, into the wilderness, to be with God. He had fasted for 40 days and 40 nights - communing with God -- in preparation for his ministry.

After that long without food, he was hungry. He understood what it meant to be really hungry. So Satan started with what he perceived might be a weakness and suggested that Jesus command the stones to be bread. "Use your divineness to overcome your humanness," Satan was saying. Give up on this quest to understand the human condition.

"But Jesus answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4)

"I have learned to know that there are more important things than the hunger," Jesus was saying. "I'm here to show what is really important, and physical hungers are not paramount."

So Satan takes him to the top of the temple. "Prove your divineness by throwing yourself off the temple and being saved by angels," Satan tempts. Je-



Jesus recognized that Satan was trying to pervert why he came. Jesus had come to save us, not to save himself. He was not going to use a miracle just for show. His miracles were designed to bring ministry to others in their need -- to succor them. He would provide an example to those who would come behind of how power of God is to be used.

"Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." (Matthew 4:7).

So then Satan tempts Jesus with power -- inviting him to join the third of the hosts of heaven that were tossed out of heaven with Lucifer for believing Lucifer's lie. Just as people can be tempted to seek power in our lives, Jesus was tempted with it.

"Then said Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (Matthew 4:10)

Jesus showed us that he was able to deal with temptations for the basic needs of life like hunger, the use of miracles for show and who we decide to serve in life in our human condition. When we turn to him in situations of temptation, he can say "I understand your temptation but I can help you withstand it."

So when he ministered to people, he taught them how to deal with temptation too -- helping them know that the word of God had answers that would help them in times of temptation. And he gave other commandments that would help deal with temptation.

"And it came to pass that when Jesus turned again unto the multitude, and said unto them, Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye must watch and pray always, lest ye enter into temptation;

For Satan desireth to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." (3 Nephi 8:50-51)

And he told them that meeting together often was another way to help with this process. Support from brothers and sisters could make us stronger and help bring us back when we stumbled.

Pain and suffering

The kinds of pain and suffering that Christ went through for us, and to help understand our pain and suffering

are summed up by Mosiah in Mosiah 1:100-101.

"And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death;

For behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people."

We know he suffered in understanding what it was to be separated from God in the garden, where blood came from every pore. We know of his suffering of pain of body -- the stripes he took that he might be healed -- of his fatigue that caused him to not be able to carry the cross timber, of his thirst that caused him to cry out on the cross for something to drink. Of the excruciating death he suffered with the nails though his hands and feet and strangling to death on the cross in excruciating agony.

If Jesus had just wanted just to die and rise again, he could have chosen a much more quick death and the authorities might have been willing to do it. He escaped some of these earlier efforts so he could suffer so that no one could say in their condition that Jesus could not understand their pain. He could succor us in our pain and infirmities because he knew what they felt like first hand.

Rejection

Jesus also knew of pain caused by relationships. Isaiah prophesied:

"He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and he hid his face from him. He was despised and we esteemed him not."

Remember the experience in Matthew when Jesus cast the devils into a herd of swine to save man possessed by them. People who saw that went back to town and told the others what had happened. The whole city came out, the scriptures said. And what was their response:

"They besought him that he would depart out of their coasts." Matthew 8:35

Remember when Jesus went back to his hometown of Nazareth. He read from scriptures in the synagogue and

told them essentially that he was the Messiah.

What was their response? Is this not Joseph's son? No prophet accepted in his own country, the scriptures tell us. But it was more than that.

His neighbors were filled with wrath and wanted to toss him from the hill the city was built on, but he was able to pass through them.

And Jesus was able to do no good except heal a few sick because of their rejection.

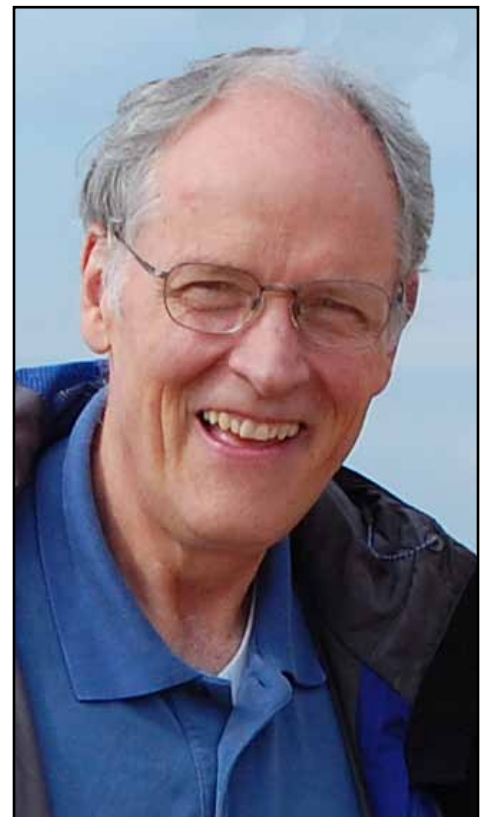
Or how about Peter. Even after Jesus warned Peter and Peter swore that he would never deny Christ, he did -- three times in one night. He declared that not only was he not a disciple, but he never even knew Jesus..

Jesus knew that Peter would do this, and tried to succor him in his fear.

Weary (and thirsty)

The scriptures say specifically that Jesus knew what it was like to be weary one time, though I'm sure this was the case more than once. And that he was thirsty. Jesus is meeting the woman at the well is the prime example.

"Now Jesus being weary with his



Alan Smith



journey, it being about the sixth hour, sat down on the well;

And there came a woman of Samaria to draw water; Jesus said unto her, Give me to drink." (John 4:8-9)

It was noon in Samaria and Jesus was at a well. He had come a long way. At times when we are weary, we can understand that Jesus knew what it was like to feel that way.

Weary of the crowds of people

Jesus recognized that sometimes we need time alone for prayer and rejuvenation to go back to ministry, just as he did when he became weary of the crowds.

And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain, apart, to pray. And when the evening was come, he was there alone. (Matthew 14: 19-20)

Or as John records it:

When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone. And when even was come, his disciples went down unto the sea. (John 6: 15-16)

After this time of preparation, he walked on the water and stilled the storm to teach them that with the power of his heavenly Father, they too could do mighty things, even in their humanness.

Frustration

Jesus was moved to action to clean out the temple when he saw how it was being desecrated. There are times when our righteous indignations needs to be dealt with.

People were being forced to purchase animals for sacrifice from temple-authorized agents to get animals deemed pure enough for the sacrifice demanded.

"And they came to Jerusalem. And Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them who sold doves;

And would not suffer that any man should carry a vessel through the temple.

And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? But ye have made it a den of thieves.

And the scribes and chief priests heard him, and sought how they might destroy him; for they feared him because all the people were astonished at his doctrine." (Mark 11:17-20)

The same story is recorded in John 2:13-17. Just as we sometimes are upset when we see the world seeking to tarnish the things of God and people seeking personal gain from what is purported to be ministry, we can know that Jesus understands what we are feeling.

Jesus wept for sorrow

We know that Jesus felt the heart-break of seeing people not respond. Jesus wept over Jerusalem:

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it;

Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes.

For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side;

And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee, one stone upon another." (Luke 19:40-43)

In his ministry in America he groaned within himself for because he was troubled over the wickedness of the people of Israel. He then prayed beautiful prayer for them that was described as being so beautiful it could not be written down.

He understands our pain when we see our loved ones not responding to the ministry of Christ and stumbling into paths that will lead to destruction.

Jesus also wept in the loss of his good friend Lazarus when he saw the suffering of his sisters and felt their grief.

"Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha met him.

The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and

went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.

Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,

And said, Where have ye laid him, They say unto him, Lord, come and see.

Jesus wept.

Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!

And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?

Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave." (John 11:30-38)

We know he ministered in that situation by raising Lazarus from the dead, a reminder that he would soon be raised from the dead so each of us could live. He understood our grief, but provided a way to succor us in that grief by the promise of resurrection.

Jesus wept for joy

On the other hand, we know that Jesus wept for joy as well. He understands what is like for us to be truly joyful and he can share that with us as well.

He was ministering to people in Americas and recognized that after his sermon to them, they are weary. He decided to send them home to reflect on what has been said. The multitude was in tears, however, looking steadfastly at him, asking him to stay. So Jesus moves from preaching to other ministry -- inviting them to bring their sick and afflicted to be healed. "Your faith is sufficient that I should heal you," he says, and takes away the infirmities and disease from every single person there. Then Jesus groaned and prayed the beautiful prayer for them mentioned earlier. We'll pick up the story from the scripture there.

"And it came to pass that when Jesus had made an end of praying unto the Father, he arose; but so great was the joy of the multitude, that they were overcome.

And it came to pass that Jesus spake



unto them, and bade them arise.

And they arose from the earth, and he said unto them, Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold my joy is full.

And when he had said these words, he wept, and the multitude bear record of it, and he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.

And when he had done this he wept again, and he spake unto the multitude, and saith unto them, Behold your little ones.

And as they looked to behold, they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were, in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about;

And they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them, and the multitude did see and hear, and bear record; and they know that their record is true, for they all of them did see and hear, every man for himself; (3 Nephi 8:20-26)

Jesus wept for joy at the experience of seeing people respond just as we can when our joy is full in response to him ministry in our lives.

He smiled

We even know that Jesus smiled. And what a blessing it was when he did.

“And it came to pass, that when Jesus had thus prayed unto the Father, he came unto his disciples, and behold, they did still continue, without ceasing, to pray unto him; and they did not multiply many words, for it was given unto them what they should pray, and they were filled with desire.

“And it came to pass that Jesus beheld them, as they did pray unto him, and his countenance did smile upon them, and the light of his countenance did shine upon them, and behold they were as white as the countenance, and also the garments of Jesus;

“And behold the whiteness thereof did exceed all the whiteness, yea, even there could be nothing upon earth so white as the whiteness thereof.” (Third Nephi 9:24-26)

We could go on with other examples of how Jesus used his time in our

human condition to understand how to teach us and succor us. He taught lessons from the everyday life of people all through his ministry -- shepherds, olive growers, builders, and more -- because he understood what their lives were like. If he were ministering among us today, some of the parables might change to deal with our changed life situations today -- but the message would not.

A testimony

Does this understanding that Jesus came to understand what our lives were like so he could succor us in our time of need mean anything to us today?

I'd like to share a testimony from my own life.

I have been remodeling a house recently, and as I reached for some trim above some stairs leading to the basement, I slipped and fell.

I landed hard on the middle of my back on a stair and rolled to the bottom. I was instantly in great pain and I had the wind knocked out of me. I was unable to take a breath.

All I could get out was “Jesus, help. Jesus, help.”

There was no one else around to provide help.

I realized that Jesus knew what it was like not to be able to get a breath. I knew he understood what I was feeling. I recognized again for split second that every breath we receive is from God.

I also knew it was no small thing to ask Jesus to ease my suffering by taking it for me. But I knew he has already made that decision. He wants to succor us in our afflictions and infirmities. We just need to call on him.

As the breath came back and the pain became bearable, I realized that I was not going to have to live with long term consequences of my poor decision to step out and try to balance myself on both sides of a chasm. I could thank God that he sent his son to help in situations just like this.

Jesus and our suffering

In fact these are the words that were given to Joseph Smith in Section 18 of the Doctrine and Covenants

“For, behold, I, God, have suffered

these things for all, that they might not suffer, if they would repent; but if they would not repent, they must suffer even as I;

which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit, and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink;

nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men;

wherefore, I command you again to repent, lest I humble you by my almighty power, and that you confess your sins, lest you suffer these punishments of which I have spoken, of which in the smallest, yea, even in the least degree, you have tasted at the time I withdrew my Spirit.” D&C 18: 2h-2k

Jesus does understand our sorrows and our joys -- he understands our condition. He came here just so he could. He understands our temptations, our sorrows, our pain, our joy. He came as one of us so he could. We can't say he doesn't understand what we are going through because he does. He calls us to respond today like he did in times past. And he longs for the time we can see him face to face -- and he can smile on us.

May we too respond so that it can be said of us as it was said of the people to whom he ministered in America -- there was never a happier people on the face of the whole earth. May the tears he weeps for us be tears of joy instead of tears of sorrow. And when he sees our response, may he be able to say as he did to those gathered in America more than 2,000 years ago -- “My joy is full.”





THOSE GOOFY SHEEP

High Priest Rob Rolfe
Lamoni, Iowa
November 22, 2015

As a scripture reading Brother Rolfe read Deut. 6:4-7, *Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*

On August 13th of this year, Lynda had surgery for what was suspected to be cancer. After the surgery we met with the doctor. I can remember him regretfully telling us she had Stage IV cancer. We were all devastated by the news and for the next few days, there were a lot of tears shed. Cancer is said to be in stage 4 when the cancer is in a metastasized state, and has spread to the nearby lymph nodes and other parts of the body, such as the bones, liver, lungs, or brain.

We talked to another doctor to get another opinion, and he told us he thought it was Stage III. That was better news, as the survivability rate for Stage III is much better. As you know, we asked for prayers and administration, and the saints all over the church prayed. The doctor ordered a scan, and he said he didn't see any cancer in any of Lynda's organs. In fact, he said he didn't see any cancer. It had not metastasized, like it would have if it was Stage IV.

What do you do when this kind of thing happens to a loved one? We said thank you Lord, over and over. Thank you, and the Saints all over the church, for your prayers and support. We are grateful. Very grateful!

This is the season for gratitude. We are supposed to be thankful. To be grateful, you have to start with remembering something for which you should

be grateful. In Judaism, gratitude is an essential part of the act of worship and a part of every aspect of a worshiper's life.

Compliance with the Mosaic law was designed to help you remember God's blessings and His expectations for you. The Shema, part of which I read at the beginning, was supposed to be recited twice per day. They were to put the law on their wrists, their foreheads and their doorposts.

If you can still remember the scripture I read at the beginning, you will have noted how important it was, and is to God, to continue each day in obedience to God and His commandments. According to the Hebrew worldview, all things come from God and because of this, gratitude is extremely important to the followers of Judaism. It should be important to Christians as well.

The Hebrew Scriptures are filled with the idea of gratitude. Two examples found in the psalms are: *O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever, (and) I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart.* (Ps. 30:12; Ps. 9:1). Our D&C 59:5b states: *and in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments.* If you have even a small amount of intelligence, you probably would think it is not a good idea to offend the Creator of the Universe.

Gratitude comes from the root word "grat". You may have heard the terms, "free gratis". It is something we get that is free. Like a gratuity or tip.

How thankful do you feel this morning? Do you have anything to be thankful for? Do you remember anything in your life for which you know you should be grateful? Do you keep a journal of thanksgiving? Are you thankful to God for anything? If you are not thankful, what do you think the reason may be?

I'd like, for just a moment, for you to think of an animal that you think is most like you. What are they? (Members gave examples of their animal) I

have been told that a person's pet shows their owner's personality. Did any of you choose a sheep?

Isn't it interesting that you never see a sheep as a mascot in our schools. Why not? We see lions and tigers and eagles and buffalo and demons, but never sheep. And yet, when you read the scriptures, what is the animal used to describe us? You know the answer. It is a sheep. Do sheep have gratitude? I don't know! But God, why can't we be like a lion? Lions are in charge. They're independent. Nobody bosses them around.

How many of you have first hand, up front experience dealing with sheep? Those of you who have had that experience, describe a sheep for me. Yes, they are dumb. They do goofy things. They stink. They are sometimes dirty. They get sick a lot. They follow other sheep to their destruction. They really, really, need a shepherd.

What do you think the sheep think about their shepherd? If it is a good shepherd they trust him. But are sheep naturally thankful? I don't know if they are thankful or not. What about us? Are we thankful every day?

Sometimes we think if we could only be like one of Jesus' disciples we would be O.K. We would be a good person. If you believe this, you didn't read about all of the bad things His disciples did and said before the resurrection. We are just like Jesus' disciples, only worse. We want to serve God, but only in the way we want to do it. We don't want to be told what to do by anyone.

One preacher said that sin is seeking independence from God. We can't do it, (be independent from God), but we seek to do it. What's our problem with that? God can see right to the base of our hearts. We shouldn't try to get away from God. We should be trying to get a firm grip on Him. Why? We live in a turbulent, sinful world. We may not like being sheep, but we know who the lion is. 1 Peter 5:8 says, *Be sober, be*



vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. That is who we are facing. Don't we say, "we're not like sheep." We can do lots of things by ourselves. Not true. We mess up over and over.

One sheep rancher found a sheep upside down in a watering trough. Really stupid! How could this happen? Maybe we should just leave it there and let it drown. But, we are like that! When we are desperate and can't see help from any other source, we sometimes then look to our Shepherd for help. Are sheep really that stupid? Sometimes yes, and sometimes no.

When I was a teenager we played ball in a two-acre field behind our barn. It was an ideal field, except for one thing. At night the cows stayed in this field and spent a lot of time around second base. Let's just say, you didn't have any problems "sliding" into second.

So to remedy the problem, I put 3 galvanized wires (no barbs) across the gate to keep the cows out for the duration of the ball season. A couple of weeks later one of the cows insisted on going its own way and I was chasing it behind the barn. I was running full speed and decided to run through the "gate" to get in front of it. I didn't remember I had strung the wires until I was about a foot from hitting them, which I did.

When I woke up, I remember looking up. Standing right over me, looking straight down at my face, was the cow I had been chasing. I couldn't swear to this, but I think the cow was laughing at me. When I was able to stand, I did, and the cow simply walked into the barn. I didn't need to do anything. She was probably saying to the other cows, you should have seen what our stupid "shepherd" just did. By the way, sheep are supposed to be as smart as cows, but I don't know how the researchers really determined that.

Jesus is a good shepherd. He's not like me. He doesn't do stupid things. What is amazing to me is why, if we are grateful for all He has done for us, we don't want to tell others about our wonderful Shepherd. If we are grateful, (or

thankful) shouldn't we be telling others about our shepherd? Why don't we do it? Well, we have 4 main excuses. One, "I'm afraid." Two, "What would my friends think?" Three, "What would happen at work?" Four, "I can't live Eup to what Jesus expects of me." The last one is easy. I can't! and You can't! Not without His help. I've been talking about stupid sheep.

How many of you have prayed stupid prayers? I have, sadly, more than once. What are stupid prayers? For example: God, should I leave my boyfriend that is beating me up? God, should I quit taking drugs? God, should I take out another credit card so I can make the payments on my current credit cards? God, give me a sign if I should do this or that, when we already know we should. How about this one? Give me a sign if I should share Jesus with someone today. Is this necessary? Don't we already have plenty of signs in these books right here?

I remember hearing about this young man who was leaving Bible college and prayed this prayer: "Give me a sign if I should share Jesus with someone today." As he sat on the bus, a man sat down next to him and started to cry uncontrollably. Now when that happens, you should just look straight ahead. Act like you didn't notice. Don't get involved. Do we do that? When the man quit crying, he apologized to the young man, and said, "if only I knew God." "Do you know God"? Was this a sign? God, if I should respond, turn the bus driver into a raccoon. Show me a sign, God. Something really obvious! Do you need a sign from God when something like this happens?

You know something. Sheep die. Apostle Paul says for the sake of Christ, we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Sheep die. Many of my friends have died. Some haven't died physically. But they died. They died because they desperately needed Jesus Christ in their lives. They needed a minute by minute relationship with Jesus Christ. Listen to what the Apostle Paul said in Romans 8:14, *But ye are not after the flesh, but*

after the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. (Does the Spirit of God live in you?) Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. (In other words, Uou don't belong to Christ.) And if Christ be in you, though the body shall die because of sin, yet the Spirit is life, because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, unto sin, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live unto Christ. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. The apostle James put it this way: "The body without the Spirit is dead."

If you don't have the Spirit of God living in you, your spiritual body is dead. That is why I said many of my friends have died. I am grateful this morning that I have Jesus Christ living within me. Can you say that Jesus Christ is living in you this morning? The good news of the gospel is that death has been overcome and we shall live forever as



Rob Rolfe



resurrected persons.

Living through Christ, if you are a "son of God," is obtaining eternal life. Is this something that would bring you joy? There is a reason for joy! If you believe there is a reason for joy, raise your hand. (Several hands went up) When I was younger I thought that God was not happy when we had fun. There is Rob down there, having fun. NO! (Big foot stamps on Rob).

In my later years, I've changed my mind. To me, joy is the essence of the gospel. "Man is, that he might have joy." God designed us to have joy. I have now been married over 50 years. I've found lots and lots of joy during this time. Lynda and I enjoy laughing together. I am grateful this morning for joy.

A few years ago Lynda and I were taking a walk. She said she thought she must be starting early onset Alzheimer's. When I asked her why she thought that, she told me about three really important things she forgot that day. I, being the fount of all wisdom, told her she was not suffering from that disease and I could prove it. I pointed out all of the flowers around the house; how she knew all their names, whether they needed to be in the sun or shade, whether they needed pruning and fertilizing. I then pointed out all of the clay and glazes she used at the college and in her studio. How she knew which clays and glazes were compatible and what temperature they should be fired.

Finally, I told her the best reason. Of all the things I had done wrong over the last 50+ years, she had never forgotten a single one of them. She looked at me and smiled. "Those items are in a separate file," was her response. We both had a good laugh out of that.

We are designed to have joy, not only now in this world, but in the next. DC Sec 90:5e says, *The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receiveth a fullness of joy; and when separated, man cannot receive a fullness of joy.* Even so, joy is not something reserved exclusively for the future. It is designed for today. In Philippians 3:10, Paul, after talking about all of the things he gave up for the knowledge of Jesus Christ, made this statement about why he gave up those things: *that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.*"

Have you given up anything to know the power of the resurrection? What did Paul mean when he said he wanted to know the power of the resurrection? Do you think the power of the resurrection only starts in the next life or is it designed to be started when you allow Christ to take control of your life? Remember, before Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He had a short visit with Martha. This visit is found in John 11:21-26. Listen closely:

Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it

thee.

Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

What is the most important thing about this promise? It doesn't start in the future. Jesus said, I am the resurrection. It starts in the present. This life isn't a waiting room for heaven. We should keep preparing as we need more and more joy now; today; this very minute. The Lion wants to bury us with so many little things that we simply can't see the power of the resurrection. If you have the power of the resurrection in you, you are thankful, you are filled with joy. You are in short, grateful. It is really good to see all of you this morning; to see your smiling faces; to hear your mellifluous singing; to hear and see your prayers. I am grateful for those blessings. My message today in one word is: LIVE!

Jesus Christ is alive! Do you know Him as your Savior? Have you placed your trust in Him? Jesus shed His blood as the price for your sin. Are you grateful for that sacrifice? If you don't know Him, turn to the Scriptures; pray, over and over and ask Jesus to come into your life.

Then-- LIVE!



Help others for Christmas

There are many opportunities to help others this Christmas.

Just like the Thanksgiving meal program, people can purchase meals for a family for \$10 at CGI Foods or HyVee in Mount Ayr, or bring the fixings in a bag to go to a family. The response to this program at Thanksgiving provided some of the meals to be provided for Christmas. This needs to be done by December 14.

Youngsters can be adopted for Christmas as well. Cards are available with sizes and wishes for Christmas for a child at the Neighborhood Center. Shopping is then done from the list. The items need to be back to the Neighborhood Center by December 14.

Sandy Crandell has details about these programs to help others.

There was a good response to the Thanksgiving food drive and the Samaritan's Purse project in November.



LOVE WINS?

**Joel Loving
Lamoni, Iowa
September 20, 2015**

From the 12th chapter of Luke, Jesus it would appear, throws us a curve ball:

Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, nay; but rather division.

For from henceforth there shall be five in one house, divided, three against two, and two against three.

The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. Luke 12:60-62

My hope is today that we will find understanding and meaning in the words of our Lord and Savior as we continue.

June 26, 2015 an announcement went all over the world. Do you know what it was? Love wins! It was the response plastered on Facebook and Twitter. It was the largest broadcast ever of a phrase on Facebook and Twitter at that time. Love wins! You know what I am speaking of. The Supreme Court decision on marriage.

Do you believe that? Did love win? The world seems to think so. The country seems to think so. Love won.

About a month ago Deni were part of a morning worship at 9:30 a.m. (I've never quite figured out if it is 9:30 or 9:45 here.) I shared a little bit about love in five minutes. I'd like to expand a bit on that at this point.

The Ancient Greeks had four distinct words for love: agápe, éros, philía, and storgē. From philia we have Philadelphia, the "city of brotherly love" from the Greek word. I'd like to give you an example of this brotherly love from the Book of Mormon.

This is about where Ammon has come into the land of the Lamanites, he has killed some people who were trying to steal King Lamoni's sheep. Here's what it says:

For they were angry with Ammon because of the number which he had slain of their brethren at the waters of Sebus, while defending the flocks of the king.

Now one of them, whose brother had been slain with the sword of Ammon, being exceeding angry with Ammon, drew his sword and went forth that he might let it fall upon Ammon, to slay him; and as he lifted the sword to smite him, behold he fell dead. Alma 12:159-160

Did love win? This man had a love for his brother, we would call it philia, but I would suggest that when we say love wins in this case, we have to be careful what we really mean. There is a subset of love called storge which is also Greek. It means family love. We all know how important family is. You love your wife or your husband and your children with enormous amounts of love.

I want to talk about storge in a world wide sense from an experience Deni and I had with our children. This was around 1989 or so. I was working at General Motors, I had a pretty high paying job, and we were having Christmas. We have a big family and we had bought a number of presents. The tree was huge but it was covered with presents. It was an amazing number of presents. We got up Christmas morning, the four kids were all excited. They surrounded the tree and we started the Christmas ritual of opening presents. In five minutes they had devoured those packages, opening all of them. Grabbing presents, tossing them aside, getting to the next one. You can imagine the scene. At the end of this five minutes -- this barrage of activity -- I looked at my wife, who had the same kind of reaction that I did, and we sort of sat there dumbfounded. What had just occurred in our home?

As we were celebrating the birth of Christ, we had just sort of turned ev-

erything upside down and what it had become but this selfish practice that we were teaching our children. We were teaching them something that I was ashamed of.

Something drastic changed at that moment. We've never had another Christmas like that. Christmas today at the Loving household -- though its different now that the kids are gone and have their own children -- for Deni and I from that point on you got one present. One small present and one big one. Christmas Eve was a service and the children participated. We talked about the birth of Jesus and what it meant. Christmas morning was always a pageant. The kids played their various roles, creating the pageant, making it up and reading the scripture and they would go through and wear their robes. We always had this big production of the Christmas pageant.

Eventually they got to the point where they thought it was funny that Dad could play the donkey at the manger scene. I think I played the donkey 12 years in a row they thought it was so funny. But it changed our celebration.

Now I want to ask you a question based on the first experience of Christmas. That was an example of storge. Love for family. Love for children. Love for those you are close to. Did love win that day? Wasn't that love? Much of the world would say absolutely.

I want to say something here that is really important for us to understand as we continue this. If I said, let's just take Alan Smith and me. If I said that Alan loves God the most of anything or anyone, and I believe he does, and I on the other hand say I love my wife the most -- she's the top. For Alan, the Lord is the top. Who loves their wife the most? Me or Alan? Does that make sense?

He who loves God first and most, loves others most. Your capacity to love is really empowered by your ability to put God first and foremost. We all must love God the most. We learned that les-



son that Christmas morning. It changed us, and we are the better for it.

Let me go on to another love. This is eros, romantic love. We are familiar with it. It bombards the airwaves and social media today. I want to go back to an old story. This comes from 2 Samuel 11. I'm talking about David.

And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.

And it came to pass in an evening-tide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house; and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.

And David sent and inquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bath-sheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?

And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness; and she returned unto her house. 2 Samuel 11:1-4

Love won, right? It was love, right? Love wins.

When Christ comes and Luke speaks about setting families in decisive fashion, he's talking about a world perspective of what love is in philia, storge or eros versus divine love and how all of us need to recognize that really, if we are focused on the wrong aspects of what love can be, the Lord needs to pull us away from that and unite us in the heavenly perspective of love. It's called agape, the pure love of Christ. This must be first and this must win in our world.

From John 15:9-13, this is how Christ would have us understand love:

As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love.

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

This is my commandment, That ye

love one another, as I have loved you.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

Agape love. Here's an even older story from scripture, Genesis 22:1.

And it came to pass after these things, that God did try Abraham and said unto him, Abraham; and Abraham said, Behold, here am I.

And the Lord said, Take now thy son, thine only Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering, upon one of the mountains of which I will tell thee.

Agape love. Love of God first. Hard to understand, perhaps even to emulate or practice, but what love won in that moment in that moment in that man? I'm here to say to all of us, as honestly and openly as I can from my heart, we must put the Lord ahead of our own family. Our prayers must be examples of understanding that.

I'll tell you, my oldest son Chris and I have had a close relationship all my life. He is very competitive. As a youngster he was a good tennis player -- probably could have become a professional. There were people in Texas who told us he had the strongest forehand of anybody they'd ever seen at his age. Texas is a good tennis state.

I remember we went to a match at one time. In Texas they play at various levels and he was at a "champ" level, and so these were the elite tennis players in Texas. He was playing a very important match. It came to a very critical point that would decide the match. The man on the other side hit a drop shot which means the ball is going to bounce twice before you are going to get to it. Chris was very fast, he lunged forward to get to the ball and the thought he got it, but the opponent hesitated and then told the no. There was a referee there who was listening and saying he wasn't sure Chris go the point. An argument started between the two boys, the tennis referee and the mother of the other player, who was there. I stayed quiet. This was go-

ing to decide the match. I finally went forward and said to all of them: "Chris, let it go." I broke his heart that day. He was devastated that he would take away something that was so important to him, something he had worked so hard on in his practices and endeavours. I took it away.

We have spoken of that moment many times because we live in a world where sports dominates to a great degree. If your a Chiefs fan you are upset about Thursday night's heartbreaking loss. I'm sorry. Heart-breaking? I can think of a few more important things than the outcome of a game for the Chiefs or whatever professional sport you follow. I only use this as an example to prove to Chris and the world that we must be making decisions that indicate what our priorities and values really are.

Love wins?

Further in John 21:15-17 we read:

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus said unto him, Feed my sheep.

So we have this interplay, this discourse between Jesus and Peter. Is Christ asking him if he has philia or storge or eros? It is agape that must trump, must trump, all of our lives and be in its proper place.

I want to remind us of the story of Enos out of the Book of Mormon, because Enos goes through a progression in his prayer. It's a very short book, but its quite profound. You can go home and read it. Enos goes through this progression as he begins to pray. He's the son of Jacob and he goes out and prays all day and all night and has this experience. I



just quickly will go through this.

He has this amazing experience where he feels the love of God and is forgiven. He matures from this personal experience to begin to pray for who? His family basically. The Lord then answers this prayer. After this he begins to become unshakable in his faith. So who does he pray for next? His enemies. What does this mean? It means that you and I should not only be praying about this congregation, this community, this country. We should be praying for ISIS and others. Enos doesn't stop there, however. He goes on to pray for -- here's where it takes this amazing Godscope leap -- he begins to pray that the records can go forward to the children of the Lamanites -- those yet unborn. See how this amazing love begins to expand? Then the Lord says, I really appreciate this. Your fathers required the same thing of me. The Lord steps in and says not only will I answer this prayer for those unborn, but the Lord reminds him this is like your ancestors did. He includes in this amazing reach around humanity, time forward and time backward. The love I'm talking about this -- the agape love I'm talking about is timeless, it's omnipotent. Do you love forward that far and backward that far? We understand that this means that Matthew will grow up and have children and grandchildren. And their grandchildren will have children and grandchildren.

The love I'm talking about now, though it sounds strange, is asking -- do we love Matthew so much that his great-great grandchildren will know of it? You know of Enos' love. You know of the love of Christ. Can we love that well? Can we be called to understand that?

It's sort of like, "That 's too big, I don't know if I can even start it." Folks, it's required if we are going to follow Christ, if we are going to be like him, we must increase the scope of what and who we love and how we pray for them. We not only pray for those yet to come, but we are thankful and love those that have come before us. We love them so much that we read their story.

I used to have a position in the Community of Christ church with some

authority, so I was often in circles with the heads of the Community of Christ church. I was recently at a table where we were talking about the Book of Mormon and I mentioned that I believed in it historically. So of you may not know that the position of the Community of Christ is that the Book of Mormon is scripture, but not historical. As we were talking about this point, I shared my testimony. These are real people that need to be loved and heard.

If you've been down to Mexico, you know what I'm talking about. You get a distinct impression that they were working very hard to tell a story -- to share that story for generations -- they were touched so much by the love of Jesus Christ. They were real people and we need to love them so much that we are willing to read about them. They are not pretend fairy tales. These are real people that we should be loving -- in agape.

I want to share with you what I consider a divine utterance by Neil Simons which he shared with me. I want to be cautionary here that this needs to be dealt with in an appropriate manner, but these are words which I think we should hear. He first quotes Revelation Chapter 18:4-5, 7-11.

"And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. 7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her; for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.

Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning,

Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour

is thy judgment come.

And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise anymore;

I have permitted the evil designs of the enemy (as revealed to you in your recent history), which were in the world's society, in its culture and in its economy, to be for you a type and shadow of things to come, in order to instruct and to enlighten my people, May you all have eyes to see, and hearing that hearkens unto the Spirit that I send upon you.

O my Saints, ye have not understood the meaning of the sacrifice, the suffering, the tribulations, and the desolations of my covenant people, known to you in this latter day as the Jews. A mere generation ago the evil masters of their society and culture and economy agreed to an evil thought among themselves, that my ancient covenant people were their enemies. Thus, they made war against my people and took captive my people. They separated husband and wife; they destroyed their families. They took away children in prison cars and carried my people away into camps,



Joel Loving



forcing them to labor for their oppressors.

In this generation you have not understood the type and shadow of Dachau, Buchewald, Bergen-Belsen and others where my people were enslaved to suffer starvation and illness until they sought death as a release. They watched helplessly as their children were carried away to destruction as the number of my people fell almost to extinction.

Remember, in April, the month of deliverance, I heard their cries for the deliverance of Israel, and I responded to their pleas, for they had ceased crying for vengeance against their persecutors, and they had ceased reviling Me because of the calamity of suffering which

had befallen them.

Then sent I, my armies to deliver the remaining fragments of my people. In just three years from the time of their deliverance, the nations of the earth recognized the legitimate restoration of my House of Israel to their ancient land of promise. Thus did I fulfill the words of the prophets by mine own Hand. Therefore, the few of a generation ago, have become a mighty people today.

O my covenant children, have you not seen, do you not hear? For those who rule in your own lands have conspired against all of you who have taken my name, to declare you their enemy. Though their weapons and methods are different, they tear your families

apart. Husband and wife are separated, while your sons and daughters are being carried away to destruction. You live like them in similar prison camps. You continue to live in Babylon, in the same garb of the slaves of Babylon; while you labor for your oppressors and starve in your souls, crying unto to Me only about your personal griefs.

Turn away from your present condition, for this is the meaning of repentance as a body. Call upon Me as a people for deliverance, and ask not for a better positions in Babylon. Know that I yet have armies that are potent to deliver the fragment of my people from tribulation, for Zion shall be.”



Thanksgiving dinner served





December 2015 Schedule

Date	Dec. 6	Dec. 13	Dec. 20	Dec. 27	Jan. 3
Speaking	Sherm Phipps	Rodney Bastow	Joel Loving	Tony Crandell	Michael Jordison
Presiding	Michael Jordison	Steve Smith	Gordon Winkler	Alan Smith	Sherm Phipps
Pianist	Cheryl Phipps	Cheryl Phipps	Cheryl Phipps	Bonnie Major	Bonnie Major
Special Music	Sue Beck	Jordison's	Jim Barber	Rob Rolfe	Diane Anderson
Family Devotions	Rodney Bastow	Rowlands	Tony Crandell	Ed Anderson	Jim Barber
Greeters	Joel Loving	Sue Beck	Sherm Phipps	Crandells	Jordison family
Custodians	Gordon Winkler	Tony Crandell	Alan Smith	Jordison family	Lovings
Sunday Evening	Bob Rowland	Steve Smith	Caroling - Ron Smith	Rowland's	Steve Smith

Wed. Prayer Svc.	12/9/2015	12/16/2015	12/23/2015	12/30/2015	1/6/2016
Location	Bob Rowland	Steve Smith	Ron Smith	Rowlands	Steve Smith
Presiding	Tony Crandell	Michael Jordison	Ed Anderson	Rodney Bastow	Jim Barber

Special Events

- December 6th Potluck following communion **Priesthood Meeting at church - 8:30 AM**
- December 12th Men's Saturday morning fellowship **11:00**
- December 20th Caroling/Sunday evening fellowship **Priesthood Meeting at church - 8:30 AM**
- January 3rd Potluck following communion

If you cannot fulfill your assigned duties, please find someone to fill in for you. Notify the pastor or presider. Thank you!



DECEMBER

Happy Anniversary to Rodney and Debbie Bastow (27) any one we missed.



DECEMBER

Happy Birthday to Geroqe Gallusha (12), Cheryl Phipps (24), Di Smith (26) and Jennifer Rowland (30) and any others we missed.



Church of Jesus Christ Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

c/o Cheryl Phipps
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Lamoni, IA 50140

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CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST - MT AYR RESTORATION BRANCH

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. (Revelation 14:6-7)

MORE NEWS AND NOTES

giving dinner on Sunday, Nov. 22, following the morning services.

This is always a great time to share in fellowship and thanksgiving to God for his marvelous blessings.

Some 60 people were on hand for the morning services and the Thanksgiving feast which followed.

Pictures of the event are included on page 14.

Men's Activities

Special men's activities are planned for the second Saturday each month.

The December activity is set for Saturday, Dec. 12, at 11 a.m. at the Pizza Shack in Lamoni.